

# InStep

A Newsletter for Role Models

## Stepping into Summer

Stepping Stones classroom presentations have wrapped up for the 1990-91 school year, and it has been a banner year for the program. Our 1991 program expansion into 21 additional Alberta communities has generated enthusiasm and interest from both educators and role models.

Efforts are ongoing to increase the profile of the Stepping Stones program. The Women's Secretariat will be actively recruiting additional role models and updating the Role Model Registry for each community over the summer.

Next year will bring new challenges as the Stepping Stones program continues to grow and evolve. As we reflect on our work over the past school year, we can take pride in the increasing number of students we have reached. Our message to young people to choose careers based on their interests, aptitude and abilities as opposed to limiting their choices to gender-based stereotypes is an important one and will ensure the diverse and well-trained work force the province needs in the 1990s and beyond.

Once again, I would like to send a sincere note of thanks to everyone who has contributed to the success of Stepping Stones.

You, the role model, make this program possible. With your involvement, Stepping Stones continues to expand the career horizons being considered by our province's young people. Comments are frequently passed on to us, and there is one message that stands out. Your efforts are recognized and very much

appreciated by students, teachers, and parents.

I wish all role models a wonderful summer. Please continue to let us know if you have any questions, suggestions or concerns regarding Stepping Stones — it is, after all, your program.

Thank you for your ongoing support of Stepping Stones. See you in the fall!



Elaine McCoy, Q.C.  
Minister Responsible for  
Women's Issues

## Did You Know?

Here are some political milestones recorded by Alberta/Canadian women on the road to equality . . .

1885: An ordinance of the Northwest Territories, which included what is now Alberta, gives unmarried women property owners the right to vote and hold office in school matters.

1894: A territorial ordinance gives widows and spinsters the right to vote in municipal elections, but not to hold office.

1910: Alberta's Local Councils of Women launch a suffrage campaign.

1912: All municipal property owners in Alberta are given the right to vote in municipal elections, but only men can hold office.

1913: The Equal Franchise League of Edmonton, the first exclusively suffrage organization, is founded.

1914: The Alberta Legislature receives a 12,000 signature petition (representing 44 organizations) for women's suffrage.

1915: Alberta Premier Arthur Sifton promises equality for women in provincial matters.

1916 (Jan.): Manitoba becomes the first province to give women the right to vote in provincial elections.

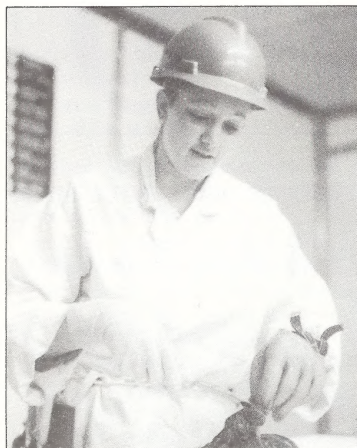
*continued on page 2*

## ► Inside Information

Role Model Profiles .....	2
A CAPPELLA .....	3
Opening Young Girls' Eyes .....	4



# Step by Step: Role Model Profiles



**Debbie Burrows** is a labourer with Canada Packers in Red Deer. She works on an assembly line processing beef. When a friend from Canada Packers encouraged her to apply for this job, she did not realize that she would become the only woman on the assembly line.

"Other women tried in the past," says Burrows, "but the physical demands of the job and working in an all-male

environment proved too much."

Burrows has been joined by seven other women who work with the 130 men on the assembly line. She believes that the Canada Packers plant is now a good place for women to work.

"When I started, I got along with most of my co-workers but a few were reluctant and made me earn their respect," notes Burrows. "After this breaking-in period, things have gone well. For instance, now I'm their union steward."

Since Burrows started with Canada Packers, the company has made it clear that workers must treat the women on the line with respect or lose their jobs. It was through the company that Burrows learned about the Stepping Stones program.

"My manager asked the women on the line if we would be interested in doing presentations," says Burrows. "I was happy to learn that such a program existed and volunteered. I've seen the uproar women in non-traditional jobs can cause and I would like to tell others how we overcame this initial reaction."



**Dr. Ruth Collins-Nakai** is a physician and professor of Pediatric Cardiology. Her attraction to medicine as a career is due to the many challenges this field offers.

"Medicine requires thinking on your feet and demands technical, clinical, research and teaching skills," says Collins-Nakai.

She has always been interested in science, and originally took zoology before applying for medicine on what she terms a 'lark'. That lark has turned

into an impressive career in an area where few female academic or career role models exist.

Collins-Nakai is past-president of the Alberta Medical Association, a member of the Premier's Commission on the Future of Health Care, as well as a member of the Subcommittee on the Premier's Council on Science and Technology.

She takes time out of a busy schedule to be involved with Stepping Stones because she believes it is an important and worthwhile initiative.

"I have been invited to several Career Day presentations and have always found them to be very rewarding," notes Collins-Nakai. "I think that the more young people Stepping Stones role models can reach, the better."

"Stepping Stones addresses a real void of female mentors in medicine and other important fields," says Collins-Nakai. "I'm very pleased the program has expanded into communities across the province."

*continued from page 1*

1916 (Feb.): Premier Sifton receives a 40,000 signature suffrage petition.

1916 (Feb.): Premier Sifton introduces the equal suffrage bill in the Alberta Legislature.

1916 (Mar.): The Alberta Legislature passes equal suffrage bill.

1916 (Apr.): Alberta's equal suffrage bill becomes law.

1917: Louise McKinney and Roberta MacAdams are elected to the Alberta Legislature — the first women elected to a political assembly in the British Empire.

1917: Female relatives of members of the armed forces are given the right to vote in federal elections.

1918 (May): Federal suffrage is extended to all women.

1919 (Jul.): Women become eligible to hold federal office.

1921: Nellie McClung, a Liberal, and Irene Parlby, for the United Farmers of Alberta, are elected to the Alberta Legislature. Parlby is appointed minister without portfolio — the first woman in Alberta and the second in the British Empire to serve as a cabinet minister.

1921: Ontario's Agnes McPhail is the first woman elected to the House of Commons.

1929: Thanks to the efforts of five Alberta women, collectively known as the "Famous Five," Canadian women are declared "persons" by the British Privy Council and are ruled qualified to sit in the Senate.

1930: Cairine Wilson of Ottawa is the first woman appointed to the Canadian Senate.

1940: Women in Quebec are given the right to vote in provincial elections, completing the enfranchisement of women in Canada.

1941: Cora Casselman is the first Alberta woman elected to the House of Commons.

1957: Ellen Fairclough, a Progressive Conservative MP for Hamilton, Ontario, is the first woman named to the federal cabinet.



# Canadian Teachers' Federation

## Study of Teenage Girls: *A CAPPELLA*

The Canadian Teachers' Federation has completed a major study of teenage girls across the country. The project involved 1,000 females between the ages of 11 and 19. Teachers in every province and territory participated by

leading student groups in a variety of discussions.

The findings from these meetings are presented in a report entitled, *A CAPPELLA: A Report on the Realities, Concerns, Expectations and Barriers*

*Experienced by Adolescent Women in Canada.* The title "*A CAPPELLA*" was chosen because young women in the study indicated that their lives were "like carrying a tune without the music."

### *A CAPPELLA* Report Highlights

Here are highlights from the report:

- 79% of the young women either agree or strongly agree with the statement: "I really believe that things like pollution and the threat of nuclear war are robbing me of my future."
- Although 78% agree that, "I really feel good about myself," 85% agree or strongly agree that they worry "a lot" about how they look. Body loathing was evident in the volunteered comments of many girls; losing weight was a general preoccupation.
- Just over 50% identify parental use of drugs and alcohol as a topic of concern and 68% identify teenage substance abuse as a problem.
- The respondents were five times more likely to volunteer comments of any kind about their mothers than their fathers, and eight more times likely to mention their relationship with their mothers than their fathers as a source of good feelings.
- The young women value the quality of relationships much more than other accomplishments, although many are concerned about succeeding in school and the world of careers. Many fear poverty, abusive relationships, and ending up homeless.
- 92% agree that women have an

equal chance to "make it" in the world, in a general sense. On a personal level, they admit they feel pressures and limitations boys are unlikely to experience, and express resentment toward male peers and the system that seems to favour them.

- Many young women volunteered comments on date rape, street rape, incest, sexual abuse and other forms of sexual violence. Many expressed resentment about the "neanderthal" attitudes of boys, their aggressiveness and their need for control.

### Quotes From *A CAPPELLA* Participants

Here is a sampling of quotes from teenagers who took part in the survey regarding their concerns and future plans:

"Learning to deal with discrimination in the working field without being feminists (yuck) is important."

"Growing up and becoming part of a bigger world requires a lot of help. We need someone to help us understand ourselves."

"I think there should be non-sexist education because if we don't stop this problem in the schools, it will continue on through life and everyone will be living in an unfair world, which isn't right."

"Girls my age are very concerned about their future. Opposite of what

adults perceive of us, we are not only concerned about boys, make-up and parties."

"It is scary knowing all of the expectations that we have placed on ourselves and society has placed on us for the future; balancing a career, a relationship with our husband, children, family, having a good body, women friends and still have time for ourselves seems like it will be very difficult."

"We are told to act like adults and then are treated like children? This confuses me and it happens especially at school from our teachers."

"I don't have any concerns being in Grade nine except for the facts of what will happen to me now that I am

and have been sleeping with my boyfriend. I was pregnant once but I had an abortion as soon as I found out."

"At this time in my life, I feel as though there is so much going on with my life that at times I feel very stressed because I am not sure which direction I am going. I believe the same goes for many other girls my age."

The study provides an interesting "snapshot" of what the current hopes and fears are of many young women in Canada. If you would like to order copies of the *A CAPPELLA* report, contact: The Canadian Teachers Federation, 110 Argyle, Ottawa, Ontario, K2P 1B4.

# Role Model Orientations: Opening Young Girls' Eyes

Although they may live and work in geographically diverse locations such as Grande Prairie, Fort McMurray, Edmonton, Calgary, Lethbridge or Medicine Hat, a common chord ties Stepping Stones role models together. Whether accountant or aircraft mechanic, millwright or manager, role models express a common desire to encourage young people to keep their options open and to realize their career goals.

The women shared their reasons for joining the program at Stepping Stones Role Model Orientations held in several communities throughout the province last March. Participants included newly recruited role models in the expansion areas and role models in Edmonton and Calgary who were unable to attend the first orientation session in 1988 or who have been recruited since then. Here are some of their comments:

"I want to open young girls' eyes to the possibility of becoming an engineer."

"I want to impress on them (students) the importance of thinking about what they can do and how they can provide for themselves."

"I landed in my career by good luck and bad planning. I'm sure there's a straighter path to take into my profession."

"I was the only woman in my geology class. I had no role model."

Role models shared personal stories of barriers they had experienced (and conquered) working in non-traditional occupations, and what made their jobs unique and interesting.

One engineer said her mother was her role model, and the person who encouraged her to become an engineer. When expressing her interest in a scholarship for engineering, her guidance counsellor told her there was only one such scholarship and it should go to a man.

Many women said they were strongly supported by family in their non-traditional career choices and were surprised that other women were not.

One role model, however, said she was given two avenues of support by

her parents — marriage or nursing. She stressed how important the program is and that young girls need to be encouraged to choose a career based on interests and abilities, not on gender.

A millwright talked about her third year of education and how her instructor, an older man, asked her how she managed heavy work. She responded jokingly, "I do only the things I can't get out of, just like everyone else."

An aircraft maintenance engineer explained that she can almost guarantee her colleagues' responses when she attends a conference or training seminar. She entered the hospitality suite at a seminar in Montreal where everyone turned, looked at her, and assumed she was in the wrong room because she was a woman.

Stepping Stones role models come from diverse educational backgrounds and occupations. Yet, enthusiasm for their jobs echoed throughout the orientations. Many enjoyed telling about the uniqueness of their jobs and what kept them fulfilled in their careers. Relatively few said that money was the main factor in job satisfaction (but it helped).

Autonomy and responsibility were most often cited. Other reasons given for job satisfaction were diversity in responsibility and that no two days are the same. One role model was asked what her average day was like and she responded that she still dreams of having an average day.

While many of the role models were newly recruited, some had seasoned experience in classroom presentations through other programs. They gave advice on handling a class clown, getting students' attention and using props.

One role model, in high-end sales, told the class clown that he had the making of a salesperson, and convinced him to sell her something. In this way, she kept control of the class, and made a potentially disruptive situation work to her advantage.

Another role model warned about making audio-visuals the main part of a presentation, rather than an enhancer.

The videotape machine in the classroom she presented in didn't work, leaving her and a colleague to quickly change the format of their presentation.

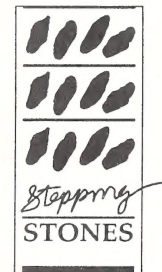
Role models also responded to the question: "If a student came up to you after a presentation and said, 'I want to do what you do', what would you tell him or her?" Here are some of their responses:

"Cultivate a curiosity for how things work."

"Keep your options open. The broader your background, the more options you have available."

And finally,  
"Find out what you like and can do, then find someone who can pay you to do it."

No doubt these words of wisdom, coupled with the wealth of experience of each and every role model, will influence many young men and women as they begin looking at their own career options.



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8th Floor, Kensington Place  
10011 – 109 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 3S8  
(403) 422-4927  
We invite your comments, suggestions and story ideas.

**Alberta**  
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